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# The Country of Origin Effect and the Role of Moral Emotions

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is to analyze the role of three specific moral emotions (gratitude, disgust, and contempt) in explaining the country of origin (CO) effect on consumer buying behavior. The methodological approach involves the use of an experimental design. We follow the procedures suggested by Muller and colleagues (2005) in order to examine the role of moral emotions. The results show that gratitude, disgust, and contempt mediate the relationship between CO information—considering country of design (CD) and country of manufacture (CM) elements—and consumer buying behaviors. In addition, the results prove the moderating effect of consumer ethnocentrism.

## INTRODUCTION

The literature concerning the Country of Origin (CO) effect suggests that consumers' perceptions about products and their attributes are affected by the CO: favorable or unfavorable evaluations of a country may lead to corresponding favorable or unfavorable evaluations of products associated with that country (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a; 2000b; Maheswaran and Chen 2006). Several factors have been demonstrated to moderate the CO effect, among which is ethnocentrism: the CO may lead to favorable perceptions regardless of the product quality for ethnocentric consumers (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a). The CO may activate various ethnocentric beliefs of consumers, which subsequently affect the interpretation and evaluation of product attributes. Recent research has opened up a new stream of analysis centered on the role of emotions in explaining the CO effect (Maheswaran and Chen 2006). Despite the importance of this topic, the role of emotions is still not systematized and, until now, has been more or less completely neglected in the CO literature. Several important questions, such as the role of emotions in explaining the CO effect, have not been investigated. This research is mainly designed to investigate these issues. In particular, the aim is to analyze the role of three specific moral emotions (gratitude, disgust, and contempt) in explaining the influence of CO information on consumer buying behavior. We propose that these emotions, moderated by ethnocentrism, mediate the relationship between the CO—considering both country of design (CD) and country of manufacture (CM) elements—and consumer intention to buy.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### The Country of Origin Effect

The CO effect is a complex phenomenon that refers to the extent to which the place of origin influences consumer product evaluations (Guran-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a, 2000b; Verlegh, Steenkamp, and Meulenberg 2005). The literature on the CO effect suggests that favorable country perceptions lead to favorable inferences about products associated with the country and subsequent favorable evaluations. In general, in the absence of information about tangible traits of products, consumers tend to rely on extrinsic cues—such as the CO—as indirect indicators of quality and risk (Maheswaran 1994; Papadopoulos and Heslop 1993). Hence, the CO cannot be considered merely a cognitive cue, but is also an affective one with symbolic and emotional meanings. The global nature of businesses further complicates the assessment of the CO effect on product evaluations, and a distinction between the country of design (CD) and country of manufacture (CM) is critical (Ahmed

and d'Astous 2008). Indeed, the CO is not always an unequivocal concept (Chao 1998; Thakor and Lavak 2003): in an increasingly global economy, products may be designed in one country and manufactured or assembled in another, thus the CD and CM are two important dimensions in the perception of the CO. Several studies have found that consumers do indeed distinguish between the CD and CM and take both types of information into account when making product evaluations (see, e.g., Ahmed and d'Astous 2002; Chao 1993; Insch and McBride 2004; Thakor and Lavak 2003). The preceding arguments imply that the CM and CD are two important elements of the general concept of the CO of a product.

### Consumer Ethnocentrism

The extent to which a product's country of origin cue is utilized may depend on several factors—e.g., consumer involvement (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a), cultural orientation (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000b), and consumer animosity (Russell and Russell 2006). In particular, the literature has demonstrated the influence of consumer ethnocentrism on the use of CO information (Shimp and Sharma 1987). Consumer ethnocentrism is defined as the belief about the appropriateness, or rather morality, of purchasing foreign-made products instead of locally-made products (Shimp and Sharma 1987). In general, ethnocentrism reflects the view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything (i.e. the home country can be considered the group to which the consumer belongs) and all others groups (i.e. other countries) are rated with reference to it. Therefore, consumer ethnocentrism can be seen as the tendency to overestimate the overall quality of domestic products (Sharma, Shimp, and Shin 1995; Shimp and Sharma 1987) and to favor products that originate from one's own country, rejecting imported products (Ouellet 2007).

### Moral Emotions

Maheswaran and Chen (2006) focus their attention on the impact of incidental emotions on the CO effect. They demonstrate that CO perceptions transcend product-specific characteristics and may have origins in social circumstances. They concentrate the attention on three emotions (anger, sadness, and frustration), showing the incidental effects of specific emotions on the use of CO information in consumer evaluations. Consistent with this stream of research, we recognize the central role of emotions in describing consumers' consumption experiences (Babin, Darden, and Babin 1998; Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999; Izard 1977; 2009; Laros and Steenkamp 2005; Richins 1997; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'Connor 1987) and we hypothesize that emotions are also important in explaining the impact of the CO of a product on consumers' evaluations and behaviors. We expect that the influences of the CM and CD on consumers can be traced back to the role played by specific emotions aroused by the CM and CD information.

We define emotion as a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts. It has a phenomenological tone and is accompanied by physiological processes; it is often expressed physically and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion (Bagozzi, Gopinath, and Nyer 1999). Emotions, organized into generic representations, play an important part in an individual's life and interactions. In particular, moral emotions may play a crucial role in interpreting people's reactions. Moral emotions are the emotions that respond to moral violations or that motivate moral behavior. Morality can be defined as judgments that "must bear on the interest or welfare either of

society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent” (Gewirth 1984, p. 978). Moral emotions are therefore connected to the interests of others (Haidt 2003). In order to identify moral emotions, the concepts of disinterested elicitors and pro-social action tendencies are used: the more an emotion tends to be triggered by disinterested elicitors and motivates a pro-social action tendency, the more it can be considered a prototypical moral emotion (Haidt 2003). Following this classification, we can identify four prototypical moral emotions—elevation, compassion, anger, and guilt—followed by other moral emotions that are distinct from the first four because of their lower level of pro-social action tendency and/or disinterested elicitors—gratitude, shame, embarrassment, contempt, and disgust. At the lower level of pro-social action tendency and/or disinterested elicitors we can find the emotions of fear, pride, sadness, happiness, DAAD (distress at another’s distress), and *schadenfreude* (i.e., the joy that is elicited by the misfortunes of others) (Haidt 2003).

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

We expect that the CO of a product is able to give rise to moral emotions because it relates to the sense of belonging of respondents to their country and, therefore, to behaviors they consider correct and fair in the interest of their home country. Given the objective of this research, we are primarily interested in the role played by emotions arising from the behaviors of others (therefore excluding all the emotions arising as a consequence of the behaviors of the elicitor): we aim to analyze whether the choice of a company to design and manufacture its product in different countries is able to generate different emotions in consumers and, therefore, to influence their behaviors. In other words, we aim to identify the moral emotions connected with different CMs and CDs of a product, and their role in mediating this information on consumer behaviors.

On the basis of these implications and suggestions, we select a set of moral emotions that we think are able to cover the range of the most important emotions that a consumer can feel in different CO contexts. These emotions are: contempt, disgust, and gratitude. We expect that these emotions are able to affect the connection between CO information and consumer behaviors.

In particular, we hypothesize that these moral emotions play a different role depending on the CO information processed by consumers. When consumers are evaluating a product characterized by favorable CM and CD information, gratitude is expected to play a central role in mediating this information on the consumer intention to buy the product. On the contrary, when the CM and CD are unfavorable, disgust and contempt are expected to mediate this information on consumer behaviors. In hybrid situations (favorable CM and unfavorable CD; unfavorable CM and favorable CD), we hypothesize the simultaneous effects of negative and positive emotions. We also hypothesize a moderating role of consumer ethnocentrism in each CO context (Balabanis and Diamantopoulos 2004).

- H1: The effects of the CD and CM of a product on consumers’ intention to buy that product are mediated by specific moral emotions aroused by CD and CM information.
- H1a: In a favorable CM and CD context, the positive emotion of gratitude mediates the relation between CM and CD information and consumers’ intention to buy.
- H1b: In hybrid contexts (favorable CM and unfavorable CD; unfavorable CM and favorable CD), both positive (gratitude) and negative (disgust and contempt) emotions mediate the relation between CM and CD information and consumers’ intention to buy.
- H1c: In an unfavorable CM and CD context, the negative emotions of disgust and contempt mediate the relation

between CM and CD information and consumers’ intention to buy.

- H2: In each context, consumer ethnocentrism plays a moderating role in “CO information–moral emotions–intention to buy” connections.

### METHOD

The methodological approach for testing the hypotheses involves the use of an experimental design. Several pretests were conducted to select both the product and the countries for the experiment.

*Pretest.* In the first pretest, subjects rated their overall level of knowledge about three different products: a digital camera, sunglasses, and ceramic tiles. These three products were selected to cover a wide range of different options: an electronic product (the digital camera), a fashion product (the sunglasses), and a technical product (the ceramic tiles). In each pretest, performed separately for each product, the subjects rated their level of knowledge of the product on a seven-point scale: sunglasses ( $n=30$ ;  $M=4.00$ ,  $std=0.95$ ); digital camera ( $n=30$ ;  $M=3.57$ ,  $std=1.19$ ); ceramic tiles ( $n=30$ ;  $M=3.23$ ;  $std=0.94$ ). We selected sunglasses, which are the product with the highest level of knowledge among the respondents. In order to select the countries, we asked the respondents to evaluate, on a seven-point scale, the ability of eleven different countries (Australia, Belgium, China, France, Japan, the UK, Italy, Morocco, Russia, Spain, and the USA) as the manufacturer and, separately, as the designer of the product ( $n=30$ ). Morocco ( $M=2.03$ ,  $std=1.10$ ) was considered to be the least able manufacturer, as well as the least able designer ( $M=1.33$ ,  $std=0.61$ ), of the product. In contrast, Italy proved to be considered the most able manufacturer ( $M=6.20$ ;  $std=1.27$ ) and designer ( $M=6.43$ ,  $std=1.07$ ) of sunglasses.

*Subjects.* In a 2 (CD: Italy or Morocco)  $\times$  2 (CM: Italy or Morocco) between-subjects design, 269 Italian consumers were randomly assigned to conditions. We also collected 70 questionnaires for the control condition (without information on the CD and CM of the product). Of the interviewees, 50.4% were female and 49.6% were male. The mean age of the participants was 39. Graduate or higher educated respondents accounted for 39% of the sample, followed by respondents with a high school education (47%) or less (14%). The statistics showed that 53.3% of total respondents were from the center-south of Italy, while 46.7% were from the north of Italy.

*Procedure.* The subjects were told that a company wants to market a new line of sunglasses and that they would read some information about this new line. The subjects were also told the CD and CM of the product in the manipulated conditions. Then, the participants proceeded to complete the dependent measures and, at the end of the questionnaire, they were debriefed.

*Independent Variables.* The cover page of the questionnaire manipulated the CO information by varying the country of manufacture and the country of design of the product. The participants learned the same information about the product, and different CMs and CDs, as they were randomly assigned to different experimental conditions. There were four experimental conditions: CM Italy and CD Italy; CM Italy and CD Morocco; CM Morocco and CD Italy; CM Morocco and CD Morocco. In the control group, the subjects learned the same information about the product without cues about the country of manufacture and design.

*Dependent Variables.* All the dependent variables were assessed using scales anchored by 1 and 7. First, the subjects expressed the degree to which they felt different emotions based on the information they had just read. Then, they gave their intention to buy the product. Afterwards, the level of ethnocentrism of the respondents

**TABLE 1**  
MEANS (STD DEVIATIONS) OF EVALUATIONS OF COUNTRIES' ABILITY AS  
PRODUCER AND/OR MANUFACTURER OF THE PRODUCT

		CD Italy	CD Morocco	<i>t</i> ; <i>p</i>
CM Ability	CM Italy	6.32 (1.14)	5.99 (1.14)	1.68; 0.10
CD Ability		5.76 (1.50)	3.39 (1.62)	8.59; 0.00
CM Ability	CM Morocco	2.93 (1.55)	2.40 (1.43)	2.10; 0.06
CD Ability		5.89 (1.26)	2.77 (1.30)	14.42; 0.00
CM Ability	<i>t</i> ; <i>p</i>	13.92; 0.00	16.44; 0.00	
CD Ability		-0.50; 0.61	2.48; 0.05	

Note—cell size ranges from  $n=59$  to  $n=70$

was measured. At the end, the subjects responded to manipulation check questions and age and gender were indicated.

**Moral Emotions.** The subjects were given a list of emotions and were asked to express the degree to which they felt each of these emotions on the basis of the information they had just read. Measures of emotions were selected from the literature (Haidt 2003; Laros and Steenkamp 2005; Richins 1997; Shaver et al. 1987). For disgust the items are a feeling of distaste and a feeling of revulsion ( $r=0.96$ ), for contempt they are contemptuous and scornful ( $r=0.97$ ), and for gratitude they are thankful and a feeling of appreciation ( $r=0.78$ ). The items measuring the same emotions were averaged to form the emotions indexes.

**Consumers' Intention to Buy.** The subjects were asked to express their degree of agreement with different statements, aimed at measuring their intention to buy the featured product: "I am willing to purchase this product the next time I need sunglasses," "I like the idea that I can buy and use this product," and "I probably will try this product when it is available" ( $\alpha=0.74$ ).

**Ethnocentrism.** Ethnocentrism was measured using four items (Ouellet 2007) selected from the CETscale (Shimp and Sharma 1987): "A good citizen does not buy foreign products," "It is not right to purchase foreign products because it puts us out of jobs," "We should purchase products manufactured in our country instead of letting other countries get rich off us," and "We should buy from foreign countries only those products that we cannot obtain within our own country" ( $\alpha=0.93$ ).

**Manipulation Checks.** The CM and CD of the product were checked in the final section of the questionnaire, which asked the respondents to remember and write down in which country the product was designed and in which it was manufactured, then rate the ability of the countries as the manufacturer/designer of the product. At the end, the subjects assessed the importance of eight different characteristics of the product: among several confounding check elements (e.g. fashion, quality, exclusiveness of the model, value for money), subjects evaluated the importance of the CM and CD in their buying choices.

## RESULTS

The experimental groups were contrasted with the control groups (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000a). No systematic effects were observed with gender and age as covariates.

**Manipulation Checks.** An ANOVA on the CM and CD revealed the main effects of the two elements. The participants remembered correctly the CD and the CM in each experimental condition, and reported correctly the expected level of ability of the countries to design/manufacture the product (Table 1). ANOVAs on the importance of CM and CD information in consumers' evaluation and

purchase of the product revealed no significant differences among the experimental conditions.

**Intention to Buy.** First of all, we tested the relevance of the CO information to consumers' evaluations by comparing two groups: one group corresponds exclusively to the control condition (without information on the CO of the product) and the other group includes all the other conditions. A *t*-test on the intention to buy index yielded a significant effect of CO information ( $t=5.67$ ,  $P<.005$ ), showing that the CO influences consumers' intention to buy the product. Moreover, an ANOVA on the intention to buy index performed among the experimental sets confirmed the influences of the CM and CD on intention to buy ( $F(4,334)=49.13$ ,  $P<.005$ ).

In order to test the research hypotheses, we analyzed the role of moral emotions in affecting the "CO information–intention to buy" relation. The means and standard deviations of the dependent variable and of moral emotions, for each experimental condition, are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

In order to detect the role of moral emotions in explaining consumers' behaviors within the experimental sets, we followed the approach of Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt (2005) in analyzing the moderated mediation and mediated moderation processes. The relevant variables are: (1) the manipulated independent variable, *X* (country of origin), indicating the different experimental conditions; (2) the outcome variable, *Y* (intention to buy), which is the measured response of the participants presumed to be affected by the treatment; (3) the mediating variables, *Me* (moral emotions), which are response variables also expected to be affected by the treatment; (4) the moderating variable, *Mo* (ethnocentrism), which is an individual difference variable, continuously measured, assumed not to be affected by the treatment.

The *mediated moderation* process can happen only when moderation occurs: the magnitude of the overall treatment effect on the outcome depends on an individual difference (in this case, ethnocentrism), then the mediated moderation question is concerned with the mediating process that is responsible for that moderation. The *moderated mediation* process happens if the mediating process that is responsible for producing the effect of the treatment on the outcome depends on the value of the moderator variable. Given that the moderator is an individual difference variable (ethnocentrism), then it would mean that the mediating process that intervenes between the treatment and the outcome is different for people who differ on that individual difference.

There are three fundamental models that underlie both these processes (Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt 2005). The first model assesses the moderation of the overall treatment effect:

$$Y = b_{10} + b_{11}X + b_{12}Mo + b_{13}XMo + e_1 \quad (1)$$

**TABLE 2**  
MEANS (STANDARD DEVIATIONS) OF INTENTION TO BUY

	CD Italy	CD Morocco
CM Italy	5.81 (1.09)	3.15 (1.53)
CM Morocco	3.49 (1.42)	2.71 (1.79)
Control group (no CO information)	4.90 (1.42)	

Note—cell size ranges from  $n=59$  to  $n=70$

**TABLE 3**  
MEANS (STANDARD DEVIATIONS) OF MORAL EMOTIONS

		CD Italy	CD Morocco
Disgust	CM Italy	1.30 (0.73)	2.93 (1.74)
Contempt		1.34 (0.79)	2.56 (1.66)
Gratitude		5.32 (1.50)	2.41 (1.59)
Disgust	CM Morocco	2.84 (1.95)	3.51 (2.33)
Contempt		2.66 (1.97)	3.34 (2.32)
Gratitude		2.96 (1.72)	1.80 (1.08)
Disgust	Control group (no CO information)	1.59 (1.04)	
Contempt		1.61 (1.17)	
Gratitude		3.74 (1.91)	

Note—cell size ranges from  $n=59$  to  $n=70$

The second model allows the treatment effect on the mediator to be moderated:

$$Me = b_{20} + b_{21}X + b_{22}Mo + b_{23}XMo + e_2 \quad (2)$$

The third model allows both the mediator's (partial) effect on the outcome and the residual effect of the treatment on the outcome, controlling for the mediator, to be moderated:

$$Y = b_{30} + b_{31}X + b_{32}Mo + b_{33}XMo + b_{34}Me + b_{35}MeMo + e_3 \quad (3)$$

In all three models,  $X$  and  $Mo$  are uncorrelated and all the variables are centered at their mean, with the exception of the outcome (Muller et al. 2005). In distinct analyses for each moral emotion (gratitude, disgust, and contempt) we estimated models 1 through 3 to demonstrate mediated moderation and moderated mediation processes.

**Mediated Moderation.** In model 1, we would expect  $b_{13}$  to be significant, indicating overall treatment moderation; in models 2 and 3, either (or both) of two patterns should exist: both  $b_{23}$  and  $b_{34}$  are significant and/or both  $b_{21}$  and  $b_{35}$  are significant. Moreover, the moderation of the residual treatment effect,  $b_{33}$ , should be reduced in magnitude compared with the moderation of the overall treatment effect. In order to understand the mediated moderation effect, it is useful to calculate:

- The simple effects of treatment on emotion at values of one standard deviation above and below the moderator (ethnocentrism) mean score:  $b_{21} + (b_{23} * \pm Mo_{sd})$  (4)

- The simple effect of the mediator on intention at values of one standard deviation above and below the ethnocentrism mean score:  $b_{34} + (b_{35} * \pm Mo_{sd})$  (5)

- The total indirect effects through the mediator (emotion), taking the product of the two simple effects (4) and (5) for each of the two values of ethnocentrism.

**Moderated Mediation.** In model 1, we would expect  $b_{11}$  to be significantly different from zero, while  $b_{13}$  is not. In models 2 and 3, either (or both) of two patterns should exist: both  $b_{23}$  and  $b_{34}$  are significant and/or both  $b_{21}$  and  $b_{35}$  are significant. A consequence is that the residual treatment effect should now be moderated, that is,  $b_{33}$  may be significant, but this is not a necessary condition for establishing moderated mediation (Muller et al. 2005). It is also useful to calculate:

- The simple effects of the manipulation on the emotion at one standard deviation above and below the moderator mean using the following equation:  $b_{21} + (b_{23} * \pm Mo_{sd})$  (4)
- The simple effect of the mediator on intention at values of one standard deviation above and below the ethnocentrism mean score:  $b_{34} + (b_{35} * \pm Mo_{sd})$  (5)
- The total indirect effects through the mediator, taking the product of the two simple effects (4) and (5) for each of the two values of ethnocentrism.
- The simple residual treatment effects at the two levels of ethnocentrism:  $b_{31} + (b_{33} * \pm Mo_{sd})$  (6)

The results, illustrated in Tables 4 and 5, show the mediating role of moral emotions, supporting H1, and the moderating role of consumer ethnocentrism, supporting H2.

The findings show that in the first set (CM Italy and CD Italy) the moral emotion of gratitude is able to affect the intention to buy

**TABLE 4**  
THE MEDIATED MODERATION AND MODERATED MEDIATION PROCESSES

	Process	Emotions		
		Gratitude	Disgust	Contempt
Set 1: CM Italy, CD Italy	Moderated	$b_{21} \neq 0$ and $b_{35} \neq 0$	No hypothesized effect	No hypothesized effect
	Mediation			
Set 2: CM Italy, CD Morocco	Mediated	$b_{21} \neq 0$ and $b_{35} \neq 0$	No verified effect	No verified effect
	Moderation	$b_{23} \neq 0$ and $b_{34} \neq 0$		
Set 3: CM Morocco, CD Italy	Mediated	$b_{21} \neq 0$ and $b_{35} \neq 0$	$b_{23} \neq 0$ and $b_{34} \neq 0$	$b_{23} \neq 0$ and $b_{34} \neq 0$
	Moderation	$b_{23} \neq 0$ and $b_{34} \neq 0$		
Set 4: CM Morocco, CD Morocco	Mediated	No hypothesized effect	$b_{23} \neq 0$ and $b_{34} \neq 0$	$b_{23} \neq 0$ and $b_{34} \neq 0$
	Moderation			

**TABLE 5**  
SIMPLE AND TOTAL EFFECTS IN MEDIATED MODERATION AND  
MODERATED MEDIATION PROCESSES

		High Ethnocentrism	Low Ethnocentrism
Set 1-CM Italy and CD Italy			
Gratitude	simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator	$1.47 + (0.04 * 1.95) = \mathbf{1.55}$	$1.48 + (0.04 * -1.95) = \mathbf{1.40}$
	simple effect of the emotion on intention	$0.33 + (-0.06 * 1.95) = \mathbf{0.21}$	$0.33 + (-0.06 * -1.95) = \mathbf{0.45}$
	total indirect effect	$1.55 * 0.21 = \mathbf{0.33}$	$1.40 * 0.45 = \mathbf{0.63}$
	simple residual treatment effect	$0.29 + (0.10 * 1.95) = \mathbf{0.49}$	$0.29 + (0.10 * -1.95) = \mathbf{0.10}$
Set 2-CM Italy and CD Morocco			
Gratitude	simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator	$-1.36 + (-0.37 * 1.95) = \mathbf{-2.08}$	$-1.36 + (-0.37 * -1.95) = \mathbf{-0.62}$
	simple effect of the emotion on intention	$0.33 + (-0.06 * 1.95) = \mathbf{0.21}$	$0.33 + (-0.06 * -1.95) = \mathbf{0.45}$
	total indirect effect	$-2.08 * 0.21 = \mathbf{-0.44}$	$-0.62 * 0.45 = \mathbf{-0.28}$
Set 3-CM Morocco and CD Italy			
Gratitude	Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator	$-0.82 + (-0.43 * 1.95) = \mathbf{-1.66}$	$-0.82 + (-0.43 * -1.95) = \mathbf{0.02}$
	Simple effect of the emotion on intention	$0.33 + (-0.06 * 1.95) = \mathbf{0.21}$	$0.33 + (-0.06 * -1.95) = \mathbf{0.45}$
	total indirect effect	$-1.66 * 0.21 = \mathbf{-0.35}$	$0.02 * 0.45 = \mathbf{0.01}$
Disgust	Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator	$1.33 + (0.50 * 1.88) = \mathbf{1.27}$	$1.33 + (0.50 * -1.88) = \mathbf{0.39}$
	Simple effect of the emotion on intention	$-0.28 + (0.01 * 1.88) = \mathbf{-0.26}$	$-0.28 + (0.01 * -1.88) = \mathbf{-0.30}$
	total indirect effect	$1.27 * -0.26 = \mathbf{-0.33}$	$0.39 * -0.30 = \mathbf{-0.12}$
Contempt	Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator	$1.11 + (0.44 * 1.83) = \mathbf{1.92}$	$1.11 + (0.44 * -1.83) = \mathbf{0.31}$
	Simple effect of the emotion on intention	$-0.26 + (0.02 * 1.83) = \mathbf{-0.22}$	$-0.26 + (0.02 * -1.83) = \mathbf{-0.30}$
	total indirect effect	$1.92 * -0.22 = \mathbf{-0.42}$	$0.31 * -0.30 = \mathbf{-0.09}$
Set 4-CM Morocco and CD Morocco			
Disgust	Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator	$1.95 + (0.38 * 1.88) = \mathbf{2.66}$	$1.95 + (0.38 * -1.88) = \mathbf{1.24}$
	Simple effect of the emotion on intention	$-0.28 + (0.01 * 1.88) = \mathbf{-0.26}$	$-0.28 + (0.01 * -1.88) = \mathbf{-0.30}$
	total indirect effect	$2.66 * -0.26 = \mathbf{-0.69}$	$1.24 * -0.30 = \mathbf{-0.37}$
Contempt	Simple effect of the manipulation on the mediator	$1.76 + (0.35 * 1.83) = \mathbf{2.40}$	$1.76 + (0.35 * -1.83) = \mathbf{1.12}$
	Simple effect of the emotion on intention	$-0.26 + (0.02 * 1.83) = \mathbf{-0.22}$	$-0.26 + (0.02 * -1.83) = \mathbf{-0.30}$
	total indirect effect	$2.40 * -0.22 = \mathbf{-0.53}$	$1.12 * -0.30 = \mathbf{-0.34}$

through a moderated mediation process. Therefore, hypothesis H1a is supported. In this context, the simple effects of the manipulation on the mediator (gratitude) reveal that the manipulation increases the emotion of gratitude (1.55 for high ethnocentrism; 1.40 for low ethnocentrism). We again calculate the simple effects of gratitude on intention to buy (0.21 for high ethnocentrism; 0.45 for low ethnocentrism) and, taking the product of the two simple effects for each of the two values of ethnocentrism, we obtain the total indirect effects through gratitude (for high ethnocentrism 0.33; for low ethnocentrism 0.63). The two simple residual treatment effects are 0.49 for the high ethnocentrism condition and 0.10 for the low ethnocentrism condition. These results show that the indirect effect, via the mediator, is higher when ethnocentrism is low rather than high. This finding is particularly interesting. The experimental treatment, in fact, affects gratitude more in the high than in the low ethnocentrism condition, whereas the effect of gratitude on intention is stronger for those characterized by low ethnocentrism. Given that in the moderated mediation process the effect of the experimental treatment on the dependent variable is mainly based on the mediating variable (in this case, gratitude), the total effect on intention to buy is higher for those characterized by low ethnocentrism, owing to the stronger influence of gratitude on consumers' intention to buy among this group of respondents.

As regards the second set (CM Italy and CD Morocco), even in this case only the moral emotion of gratitude is able to affect intention to buy but, differently from the first experimental set, through a mediated moderation process. The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of gratitude, is stronger when the level of ethnocentrism is high (-0.44) rather than low (-0.28). Consistent with this, the results reveal that the residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is less moderated by ethnocentrism, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled. Indeed, the coefficient associated with the manipulation\*ethnocentrism interaction has been reduced from -0.52 (in equation 1) to -0.47 (in equation 3).

In the third set (CM Morocco and CD Italy) all the three moral emotions of gratitude, disgust, and contempt are able to affect intention to buy through mediated moderation processes. The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of contempt, is stronger when the level of ethnocentrism is high (-0.42) rather than low (-0.09). The residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is less moderated by ethnocentrism, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled (it has been reduced from -0.49 to -0.41). The same results are found for the other two emotions. The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of disgust, is stronger when the level of ethnocentrism is high (-0.33) rather than low (-0.12). The residual effect of the manipulation on the outcome is less moderated by ethnocentrism, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled: the coefficient has been reduced from -0.49 to -0.37. For those high in ethnocentrism, the manipulation decreases gratitude and the effect on intention to buy is -0.35. For those low in ethnocentrism the manipulation does not decrease gratitude and there is no effect on the outcome (the total indirect effect is 0.01). The results also reveal that the residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is less moderated by ethnocentrism, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled. The manipulation\*ethnocentrism coefficient has been reduced from -0.49 to -0.41.

These findings show the important role played by the emotion of gratitude in the hybrid contexts. In the "CM Italy-CD Morocco" set, gratitude is the only emotion able to affect the relation between CO information and intention to buy, whereas the negative emo-

tions of disgust and contempt prove not to have a role in affecting this connection. In the "CM Morocco-CD Italy" context, instead, both gratitude and disgust and contempt are able to affect the "CO information-intention to buy" connection, underlining the presence of a mix of positive and negative emotions in this condition. Therefore, H1b is partially supported.

In the fourth set (CM Morocco and CD Morocco) all the two negative moral emotions of disgust and contempt are able to affect intention to buy through mediated moderation processes, supporting H1c. The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of disgust, is stronger when the level of ethnocentrism is high (-0.69) rather than low (-0.37). The residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is -0.58, once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled (it has been reduced from -0.67). The CM and CD effect on intention to buy, interacting with the emotion of contempt, is stronger in the high ethnocentrism condition (-0.53) than in the low ethnocentrism condition (-0.34). Once the mediator and its interaction with the moderator are controlled, the residual direct effect of the manipulation on the outcome is -0.61 (it has been reduced from -0.67).

## CONCLUSION

This research adds to the growing body of literature that contends the role of emotions in consumer evaluations and behaviors, extending the analysis of emotions on the CO effect. In particular, the experiment featured in this research details the effects of three specific moral emotions (gratitude, disgust, and contempt) on the use of CO information in consumer buying behavior.

### Moral Emotions and the CO Effect

The findings show that specific moral emotions mediate the effect of CO information on consumer intention to buy, and these mediating effects are different depending on the specific CM and CD of the product. In detail, this research shows that the emotions of gratitude, contempt, and disgust mediate the influence of CO information on consumer intention to buy, and this influence is qualified by the moderating role of an individual characteristic: consumer ethnocentrism.

Deepening the role of moral emotions, the results show that their mediating effects are different depending on the CO information processed. It seems that, when the CM information is favorable, regardless of CD, the emotion of gratitude is central: both in "CM Italy-CD Italy" and "CM Italy-CD Morocco" contexts, gratitude is fundamental in explaining the influence of CO information on consumer behavior: in the first context through a moderated mediation process and in the second through a mediated moderation process. Moreover, the negative emotions of disgust and contempt, initially hypothesized as able to influence the CO effect in the "CM Italy-CD Morocco" experimental set, are shown not to play a significant role in this situation, underlining the absence of a mix of positive and negative emotions in this context and, therefore, highlighting the central role of gratitude. It is therefore possible to conclude that, when the CM information is favorable, regardless of the CD, gratitude plays a fundamental role in the "CO information-intention to buy" relation.

When the CM information is unfavorable, regardless of the CD, the negative moral emotions of disgust and contempt are shown to be important in influencing the "CO information-intention to buy" connection. In the "CM Morocco-CD Italy" context, the emotion of gratitude is also shown to play a role side by side with the two negative emotions of contempt and disgust, emphasizing that in this situation a mix of positive and negative emotions affecting the "CO information-intention to buy" connection takes place.

To conclude, these findings show the influence of CO information on consumer behavior and the role played by moral emotions. Thus, the results suggest devoting particular attention to CO communication strategies: the delocalization and international sourcing paths followed by an always increasing number of firms highlight the relevance of communications strategies to consumers, which encompass the management of different CO cues that are able to foster different moral emotions and, consequently, affect consumer behaviors. Our findings reveal how the CO content is able to affect the overall evaluation of the product, thus a communications strategy based on the origin of the product has to be carefully managed because if the wrong information is conveyed, negative moral emotions are fostered and the effect on consumer behaviors could be extremely negative.

### Limitations and Future Research

Some issues that emerged from this research may merit further investigation. First, this research demonstrates the role of three specific moral emotions in qualifying the CO effect, showing the relevant mediating effect they exert on the "CO information–intention to buy" connection. Further research should examine the role of other moral emotions characterized by different degrees of disinterested elicitors and pro-social action tendencies. It could be of interest to examine the role of moral emotions arising as a consequence of the behaviors of the elicitor. Analyzing, for example, the role of embarrassment or shame (in mediating unfavorable CO information) or pride and happiness (in mediating favorable CO information) on consumer behaviors in a social consumption context should contribute to the knowledge on this topic. Second, our findings suggest that the influence of moral emotions in mediating the CO information on intention to buy depends on the CO information processed by consumers: favorable CO information gives rise to positive emotions; unfavorable CO information gives rise to negative emotions. In hybrid contexts, when CM is unfavorable (Morocco), negative emotions play a relevant role side by side with the emotion of gratitude; when CM is favorable (Italy) only the emotion of gratitude has a role in mediating the "CO information–intention to buy" connection. This means that the CO of a product is able to give rise to positive moral emotions when it confirms the link of respondents to the country they favorably evaluate as the manufacturer, whereas it gives rise to negative emotions when it questions this connection. This relation deserves further research. Third, the findings highlight the moderating role of the individual characteristic of ethnocentrism within the "CO information–moral emotions–intention to buy" connections. This moderating role of consumer ethnocentrism needs to be further analyzed. Finally, different contexts, situations, and motivations may lead consumers to experience emotions with different degrees of intensity, or to experience different emotions. These elements may affect how consumers process information (Jain, Lindsey, Agrawal, and Maheswaran 2007) and need to be checked and investigated.

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